

For 34 years, Jack Connell represented Augusta, Georgia, as a member of the Georgia House of Representatives. For 26 of those years, Jack had the distinction of serving as the speaker pro tempore of the Georgia House. A representative of the Greatest Generation, Jack served in the Army Air Force as a bombardier navigator during World War II. He then worked as a traveling salesman, went on to own several businesses, and began a long career of public service.

Someone once said that it's easier to fight for your country than it is to live for your country. Jack Connell did both, for which we can all be grateful.

SKILLS ACT

(Mrs. WAGNER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mrs. WAGNER. Madam Speaker, the 113th Congress was elected to tackle the "big problems"—and there is no bigger problem facing our country right now than getting hardworking Americans back to work with the skills they need to compete in a very tough economy.

Today, the Federal Government currently operates more than 50 different job training programs, many of which are duplicative, at a cost of \$18 million annually to taxpayers. With nearly 20 million Americans unemployed or underemployed, it's time to cut through the red tape and start training individuals with the skills they need to find high-paying middle class jobs.

That's why the House will take up the SKILLS Act, which streamlines 35 overlapping job training programs, including many identified by the non-partisan GAO, and eliminates unnecessary red tape so that State and local resources go directly to job seekers.

According to a report released by St. Louis Community College, 76 percent of employers found that workers lacked the proper training to contribute right away, and the most in-demand certificates for job openings were for registered nurses. The SKILLS Act addresses those needs.

It's time we start investing in nurses, medical assistants, and manufacturing technicians, and be sure to cut the ineffective government programs that do little to train individuals with skills they need.

UNEMPLOYMENT IS A PRIORITY

(Ms. WILSON of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Ms. WILSON of Florida. Madam Speaker, it's now been 803 days since I arrived in Congress and the Republican leadership has still not allowed a single vote on serious legislation to address our unemployment crisis. My question is simple: Why then are we here?

In poll after poll, election after election, unemployment ranks as our constituents' number one priority. And for

good reason. Unemployment deprives people of their basic dignity, their health care, their homes, and their self worth. High levels of unemployment deprive the government of the tax revenue needed to overcome our fiscal challenge. President Obama has proposed the comprehensive American Jobs Act to get people trained, get people working, and get people contributing to the tax base.

Madam Speaker, it's time to bring this bill to the floor. Our mantra should be simple: jobs, jobs, jobs. People are suffering. People are hurting for jobs, jobs, jobs.

PRESENTING A TIMELY BUDGET

(Mr. HULTGREN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. HULTGREN. Madam Speaker, today I speak of the importance of working together to adopt a budget on time in the 113th Congress. For the last few years, the House has passed a responsible budget that would rein in spending and debt without raising taxes while protecting the vital safety nets of Medicare and Social Security—only to see the Senate fail to pass any budget at all. This is irresponsible and cannot happen again this year.

The American people and families back home in my district in Illinois cannot afford a government that does not meet its basic responsibility to adopt a budget on time each and every year. The very first bill I introduced as a Member of Congress was the Constitutional Congressional Pay Accountability Act in 2011, legislation that said if Congress failed to meet its statutory deadline to pass appropriations bills on time, then Members of Congress should not get paid. This simple and straightforward concept defines what every American family and job creator understands: that you cannot spend more than you take in.

Let's act responsibly to pass a budget and work with our colleagues in the Senate to ensure we get the job done this year.

HONORING SERGEANT MAJOR ANDREA FARMER

(Mr. BUTTERFIELD asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BUTTERFIELD. Madam Speaker, I rise to honor and congratulate Sergeant Major Andrea Farmer, who will soon retire from the United States Army after 30 years of service.

A native of North Carolina's First District, Sergeant Major Farmer's work ethic has allowed her to successfully hold a variety of positions, including Chief Career Management NCO. Sergeant Major Farmer's abilities resulted in her being awarded a master's degree in Human Relations and Interdisciplinary Studies and receiving the Army Women's Legacy Scholarship Award. Sergeant Major Farmer will re-

tire as program manager for the 23rd Quartermaster, Sexual Harassment Assault Response Prevention Program, where she works very hard to aid victims of sexual assault.

It is with great pleasure that I congratulate her upon her retirement, and also to recognize Andrea's parents, Bobby and Mildred Farmer of Nash County, North Carolina, who instilled high values in their daughter many years ago.

I ask my colleagues to join me in thanking Sergeant Major Farmer for 30 years of service to our country.

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REFORM ENTITLEMENTS

(Mr. PITTENGER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. PITTENGER. Madam Speaker, for too many years our leaders have irresponsibly put off the tough decisions necessary to place our country on sound financial footing. President Obama seems to not be focused on the problem, as he never even mentioned our nearly \$17 trillion debt during his inaugural address and State of the Union speech.

Yet Peter Orszag, former Budget Director for President Obama, recently told a bipartisan group of freshman Representatives:

Unless you deal with the debt, you're playing games with our economic future. Unless you find savings with entitlements, you're playing games with the debt. You better go fix it.

American taxpayers deserve and expect an accountable government, not a bloated bureaucracy in need of credit counseling. Each passing year makes the decision more difficult and the changes more painful. Medicare will be insolvent by 2024, which means we are rapidly squandering any chance to fix the problem.

Our \$17 trillion debt, which currently results in \$220 billion in annual interest payments, is a drag on our economy, deterring our ability to create jobs for American families. Reforming entitlements must be done to help our economy grow today and provide for the future.

Any plan to reform entitlements must preserve the current benefits promised to this generation while providing guaranteed options for future generations; however, we must be strong and take action. We must enact a responsible plan to preserve these important safety nets for future generations; for if we do nothing, we will watch as American families suffer even more after Medicare and Social Security collapse while our Nation faces economic collapse.

HONORING MEDAL OF HONOR RECIPIENT RICHARD PITTMAN

(Mr. MCNERNEY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)